

## 4. Parking Facilities

The Houston Street historic area first developed without the automobile and its streets were designed for pedestrians and horse-drawn conveyance, later followed by a trolley line. However, the automobile appeared early in the twentieth century and continues to be a major influence on the street. Even so, its visual impacts should be minimized.

New parking facilities should be designed to be attractive, compatible additions to the Houston Street historic area. Using high quality materials, providing a sense of scale in architectural details and providing active uses at the sidewalk edge are methods that can mitigate the potentially negative impacts of new parking facilities. In general, a new parking facility should remain subordinate to the street scene.

This chapter presents design guidelines for the following parking-related design issues:

- Location of parking facilities
- Visual impacts of surface parking
- Visual impacts of parking structures
- Security and pedestrian circulation

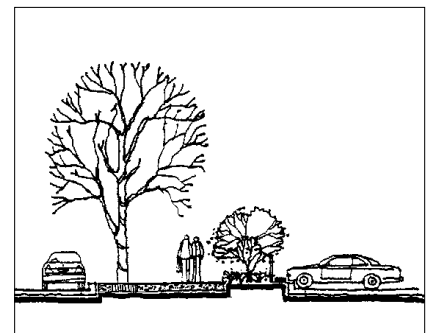
### Location of Parking Facilities

#### 4.1 Locate a parking facility, particularly a surface lot, in the interior of a block whenever possible.

- This acknowledges the special function of corner properties, as they are generally more visible than interior lots, serve as landmarks and provide a sense of enclosure to an intersection.

#### 4.2 Site a parking lot so it will minimize gaps in the continuous building wall of a block.

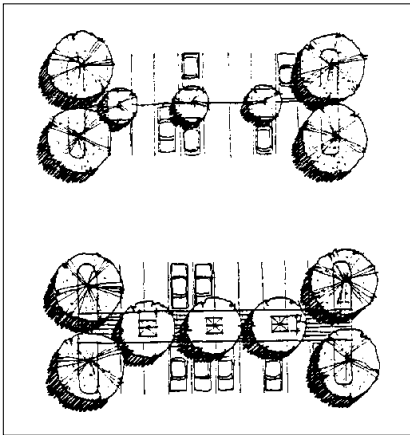
- Where a parking lot shares a site with a building, place the parking at the rear of the site or beside the building. In this way, the architectural continuity of the street can be preserved.



*Where a parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a buffer.*



*Use a combination of trees and shrubs to create a landscape buffer.*



*Minimize the negative visual impact of cars parked on site. Divide parking lots into smaller areas with planted buffers between them.*



*Design a parking structure so that it creates a visually attractive and active street edge.*

## Visual Impacts of Surface Parking

### 4.3 Where a parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a visual buffer.

- This may be a landscaped strip or planter that is a minimum of eight feet in depth.
- Consider the use of a wall as screen for the edge of the lot. Materials should be compatible with those of nearby buildings.
- Use a combination of trees and shrubs to create a landscape buffer.

### 4.4 To reduce the visual impacts of a large parking lot area, divide it into a number of smaller parking parcels and separate them with landscaping.

- Plant shrubs and small trees to define circulation routes for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Divide parking lots into smaller areas with planted buffers between them to minimize the perceived scale of the total field of stalls.

## Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

Parking structures should be designed to enhance the activity of the streetscape on Houston Street. At a minimum, a parking structure should help to animate the street and be compatible with the surrounding historic context. The visual impact of the cars themselves should be minimized. *(Note that these guidelines apply in addition to the General Design Guidelines presented in Chapter Two for the design of an infill building.)*

### 4.5 Design a parking structure so that it creates a visually attractive and active street edge.

- When feasible, a parking structure in the area should be wrapped with retail, commercial or an other active use along the street edge to shield the facility from the street and to add activity to the street.
- Other methods of accomplishing this include, but are not limited to:
  - Retail/commercial wrap
  - Murals or public art
  - Landscaping
  - Product display cases

#### 4.6 A parking structure should be compatible with traditional buildings in the surrounding area.

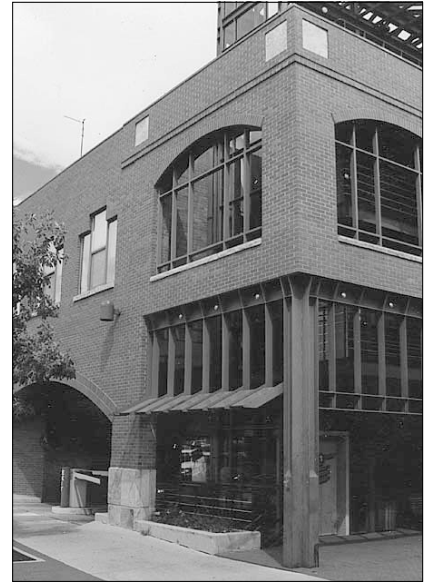
- Respect the regular window pattern and other architectural elements of adjacent historic buildings.
- Maintain the alignments and rhythms of architectural elements, as seen along the street.
- Continue the use of similar building materials.
- Avoid multiple curb cuts. These complicate turning movements and disrupt the sidewalk.
- Express the traditional widths of buildings in the area.



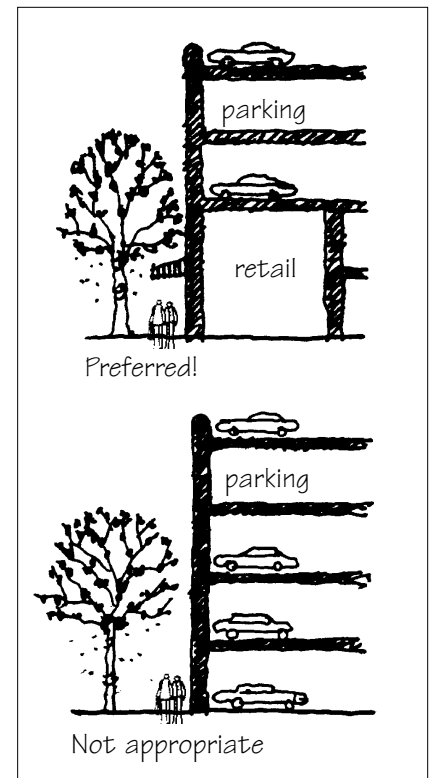
*The context for this parking structure in downtown Boulder, CO, is two- to four-story brick commercial buildings.*



*A part of this infill building is a parking structure that is set back from the front and sides of a retail wrap. The openings in the parking section reflect window proportions similar to those seen historically in the area.*



*This parking structure incorporates a wrap of retail stores along the street edge. The storefronts are contemporary interpretations of the historic downtown context.*



*The ground level of a parking structure should be wrapped by retail, office or some other active use along the street edge.*

## Security and Pedestrian Circulation

### 4.7 Design a parking facility so that pedestrian access is easy and clearly defined.

- Walkways should be clearly defined with graphics, lighting or landscaping.
- Direct connections between a parking structure and its supporting businesses are desirable.
- Interior and exterior lighting should be planned to assure user safety.



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